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ABSTRACT

The design of the study of sustaining effects is quite complex and this report consists of a description of its five substudies. They are: (1) longitudinal study-will follow a large number of students who are being exposed to a variety of compensatory programs and will determine their educational effectiveness; (2) innovative programs study-will study students involved in this sample who will take the same tests as those in the longitudinal study and will collect information on programs school climate, and principal and teacher characteristics; (3) cost-effectiveness study-will collect resource and cost information on the various compensatory programs for both the regular school year and for summer programs; (4) participation study-will attempt to determine the correlation between economic and educational disadvantagement by conducting a 15,000 household survey of parents with children in the sample focusing on the economic environment in the home, the parents' attitude towards the childs' education, and the parents involvement with the school; and, (5) successful program strategies study-will visit each site identified as a successful program and gather materials for a detailed description of the program for dissemination. Eight major policy questions that the major study will provide answers to are included. (Author/AM)

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STUDY OF THE SUSTAINING EFFECTS OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION ON BASIC SKILLS

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An Overview

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I. Introduction

In supporting the education of the disadvantaged under Title I, the federal government has made between one-and-a-half and two billion dollars available each year for the last ten years. Although there have been studies of the effects of this support, none of them have been sufficiently comprehensive or longitudinal to give strong indications of the impact of Title I programs on the educational attainment of the disadvantaged. In 1974, Congress passed PL 93-380, which requested the Commissioner of Education to undertake a number of policy-related studies of compensatory education. Among the studies mandated is the Study of the Sustaining Effects of Compensatory Education on Basic Skills. It is anticipated that the present study will provide evidence on the following policy questions:

1. What is compensatory education? What are its varieties?
2. Who receives what kinds of compensatory education?
3. How do local and home conditions influence the effectiveness of compensatory education?
4. What effect does receipt of compensatory education have on educational growth?
5. Is there an optimal duration for receipt of compensatory services?
6. What happens educationally to students when their compensatory services are discontinued?
7. At what grade levels are compensatory services most effective (or cost-effective) in raising educational achievement?
8. How can the effectiveness of compensatory education be increased?

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Each of these main questions has a number of subquestions related to the resources used in the programs, the influence of parental involvement, differences among students who benefit from various programs, etc.

The design of the study of sustaining effects is quite complex and consists of the following major substudies:

1. Longitudinal Study
2. Innovative Programs Study
3. Cost-Effectiveness Study (RMC Research)
4. Participation Study (Decima Research)
5. Successful Program Strategies Study (RMC Research)

II. The Longitudinal Study

The basic purpose of the longitudinal study is to follow a large number of students who are being exposed to a variety of compensatory programs and to determine the educational effectiveness of these programs. During the first operational year of the study, various achievement and attitudinal measures will be administered to all of the students in grades one through six in 345 schools. In addition, information will be collected on the students' backgrounds and the educational programs to which they are exposed. (The instruments and measures will be described in detail by Dr. Wellisch.) For most of these students we will obtain fall and spring performance measures for three successive years (and perhaps for two additional years).

A sample of 270 schools will be chosen to represent the nation in terms of geographic location, school size, and poverty level. Thirty schools will

be composed of students who are in need of special compensatory services but are not receiving them, and 45 schools will represent especially innovative or successful programs. (Ralph Hoepfner will discuss the sample in more detail.)

III. Innovative Programs Study

Since one of the primary purposes of the study is to assess the effectiveness of compensatory programs, it is imperative that such programs be richly represented in the sample. Some will appear from the representative sample of 270 schools, but to assure our ability to study such programs, 45 additional schools will be added. State departments of education, the U.S. Office of Education, and our own consultants recommended more than 250 schools with innovative programs for inclusion in the sample. The application of preliminary criteria reduced the number to 81 schools, each of which were individually visited to obtain detailed information regarding the nature and success of the innovation. From these schools, 45 will be selected for inclusion in the final sample. The students in the schools in this sample will take the same tests as those in the major longitudinal study. Of course, information on programs, school climate, and principal and teacher characteristics will also be collected.

IV. Cost-Effectiveness Study

SDC has subcontracted with RMC Research Corporation to do the cost-effectiveness study. There are two parts to this study--one related to the regular school year and the other to summer programs. For those schools in the regular year program, RMC will collect resource and cost information on the various compensatory programs. From this information they will be able

to characterize the staff and other resources used in the programs to which the students are exposed. Since SDC will be collecting achievement information on these same students, it will be possible to relate the cost of programs to student achievement. Thus, we should be able to make statements regarding the cost-effectiveness of compensatory education programs.

The second aspect of this work relates to summer programs. For the students in the study, we will have spring test scores and scores for the next fall. Some of the students will have attended summer school, while some will not. Thus, we can do analyses that will allow us to infer the effectiveness of summer programs. In addition, since these summer programs vary considerably in length and content, RMC will collect information on the programs and on the costs associated with them. This information will allow us to draw inferences regarding the cost-effectiveness of various summer programs.

V. Participation Study

SDC has subcontracted to Decima Research to undertake the Participation Study. This study was requested by Congress to establish the relationship between economic disadvantagement and educational disadvantagement. At the present time, Title I funds allocated to a state and subsequently to an LEA are based entirely on economic criteria. Once the funds are allocated to a school, children are chosen to participate in compensatory programs on educational criteria. There are some in Congress who have proposed that allocations should be based on educational disadvantagement rather than economic factors.

Decima will conduct a 15,000-household survey of parents with children in our sample to ascertain 1) the economic environment in the home, 2) the parents' attitude toward the child's education, and 3) the parents'

involvement with the school. Since SDC will have achievement test scores on the children involved, we will be able to determine the correlation between economic and educational disadvantagement. With this data we can explore policy issues that would arise if various different funding criteria were adopted. We will be able to relate parental attitude and involvement in the school to student performance and to teachers' reports regarding both students and parents.

VI. Successful Program Strategies Study

After we have collected considerable data on the performance of the students we will be able to study the relative success of the different programs in which they have participated. Since we have made a special effort to include programs that we believe a priori should be successful, we anticipate that there will be a number of successful programs that have been empirically validated. Once these successful programs have been identified, RMC Research will visit each site for several weeks and gather material for a detailed description of the program. In this way, we hope to make available to the educational community descriptions of programs they may want to emulate.

VII. Administration

A program of this size requires a formal organization and clear assignment of responsibilities. Dr. George Mayeske is Project Officer for the U.S. Office of Education, with Dr. Jan Anderson his Deputy and Kathryn Crossley as Administrative Assistant. As Project Director, I am assisted by Dr. Ray Stewart as Deputy Director; Dr. Jean Wellisch, who is in charge of instrument development; Dr. Ralph Hoepfner, in charge of design and analysis;

Dr. Dean Lee, in charge of field operations; and Carl Molitor, in charge of instrument distribution, scoring, and data reduction. In addition to the two subcontractors already mentioned, Dr. Mary Spencer of Pacific Consultants is helping in the development of the Practical Achievement Scale, a measure of functional literacy.

We are being supported by a large and distinguished group of advisors who are organized into seven groups:

Policy Advisory Group
Research Advisory Group
Panel on Achievement Data
Panel on Functional Literacy
Panel on Attitude Measurement
Panel on Bias in Evaluation
Panel on Innovative Compensatory Projects

Now my colleagues will describe in more detail many of the parts of the study outlined in this overview.